

the Stonechat—which no one ever dreams of confounding, any more than an observer of the living birds would confound the Palestine species, or the Stapazine and Eared Chats.

There are few more interesting birds in the Holy Land than the Blackstart, *Pratincola melanura*, Rüpp. (*Cercomela asthenia*, Bp.). It was first described from Abyssinia and Arabia, but is also mentioned by Dr. Jerdon as apparently extending to Sindh. Its Palestine range is most limited—the mouths of the wadys opening on the Dead Sea, up which it extends sometimes a few miles, so that it may be found sparsely up the whole ravine of the Kedron. It is a lively and fearless bird, perching rather more frequently on a bare twig than on a stone, and recalling the Stonechat much more than the Wheatear. Its note is only heard during the breeding-season, and is loud and not varied as it sits for some time motionless but for the jerking of its tail. The nest is placed in a chink among the boulders; and the eggs are like those of the Stapazine, but smaller, clear blue, with russet spots sparsely scattered over the surface. We first met with it not very far from Jerusalem, on the road to Jericho, and found it most abundant at Engedi, where we might have shot fifty in a morning. It is also common about the salt-mountain, but eschews the fertile oases, while it hangs about their outskirts. There is no difference whatever between the sexes. The only other members of the genus *Pratincola* are the Whinchat and Stonechat. The former (*P. rubetra*) we only observed on passage in spring passing to the northward, but never remaining to breed. *P. rubicola* was extremely abundant in every part of the country, from the Mediterranean shores to the Dead Sea, in winter, but took its departure in the beginning of March, not remaining even in the highlands of Lebanon. *Accentor modularis* only just makes good its claim as a bird of Palestine by residing in the Lebanon throughout the year, where, however, it is very scarce.

IV.—*A Month in Tripoli*. By W. T. H. CHAMBERS.

BELIEVING that the ornithology of Tripoli is a subject about which little has hitherto been known, I am induced to hope

that the following short account of a month's sojourn in that country may not be unacceptable, especially as I devoted twenty-four days to a journey in the interior, chiefly with the intention of obtaining specimens, and at the same time of recording whatever birds I was able to recognize *en route*. My sanguine expectations of meeting with rarities, however, were not destined to be fully realized, as will be seen from the names of the birds mentioned in these remarks as having been actually obtained or identified with certainty by me. Many of the readers of 'The Ibis' are well aware that in camp-life one has little time for the preparation of specimens; and I avoided, in consequence, uselessly destroying birds with which I had been familiar in other parts of the East.

I took advantage of the English steamer connected with the telegraph, and leaving Malta on the 10th of March, 1866, arrived in Tripoli harbour the evening of the following day, but too late to disembark. I was informed, however, that, as travellers seldom find their way to Tripoli, facilities for a journey into the interior were simply *nil*, and the prospect of carrying out my intention seemed extremely small. The next morning I received a kind welcome from my friend Mr. F. R. Drummond-Hay, Her Majesty's Consul-General, who solved my difficulties for me at once, by introducing me to Mr. F. Warrington, a gentleman long resident in Tripoli, and thoroughly acquainted with the country; and to the united kindness of these two friends I am indebted for one of the pleasantest trips I ever made. Mr. Warrington most obligingly agreed to accompany me; but, owing to the necessity of sending into the country for camels, the preparation for the journey occupied two days and a half, which time I employed in exploring the environs of the town.

Tripoli is built, facing the east, on a tongue of land which, extending northward, terminates in a reef of rocks curving to the east, and forming an effectual breakwater against the north-west gales so prevalent in the Mediterranean. The town itself appears cleaner and more prosperous than many others under Turkish sway, and, with the considerable exception of a number of Maltese, contains very few European residents.

Passing through the Bab-el-Bahr, or gate near the sea, the traveller finds himself on the so-called "Pianora," a sandy expanse about a mile and a half long and half a mile in width, whereon is held a weekly market attended by Arabs, who, from a distance of even a hundred miles, bring the few native productions to exchange for cheap European wares both useful and ornamental. Crossing this plain, one enters a forest of date-palms interspersed with gardens, which extend eastwards along the sea-coast for about eight miles. It is but a narrow strip, however; for a ten minutes' ride southwards brings one to the borders of the desert which nearly surrounds Tripoli. Beyond this desert, at a distance of twenty miles, is a fertile plain some five-and-twenty miles in width, terminating at the foot of the Ghrian hills, the continuation of the great Atlas range. These hills, describing a semicircle round the plains and desert of Tripoli, strike the sea about sixty miles to the eastward of the town; and, though regarded by the Arabs as high mountains, they attain at most but an elevation of one thousand feet, expanding into a vast undulating plateau, which becomes more desolate and waterless as the traveller advances further southward, till it joins the confines of the Great Sahara, at the distance of about twelve days' journey from Tripoli. With the exception of occasional fertile spots, these hills are but thinly cultivated by the Arabs, whose prosperity has sadly diminished since the forced occupation of the country by the Turks. Nothing could exceed the hospitality and kindness I experienced at the hands of the Tripolitan Arabs, who hold Englishmen in such high esteem that the fact of being one is the best passport in the country.

The evenings of the two days I spent in preparing for my journey I strolled to the Pianora, where I observed *Cypselus apus* and *Hirundo rustica* to be very plentiful, and sporting around the ruins of the old castle. There is a tree growing in the courtyard of the British Consulate which forms the winter roosting-place of hundreds of *Passer salicicola*. Every branch and twig of it is thickly covered with them; and the noise they make is perfectly deafening. Towards spring their numbers gradually diminish, probably owing to the greater attractions the harvest-

fields then present. *Upupa epops* and *Motacilla alba* are also common; the former, by its frequently uttered call-note, appeared to be breeding.

At last the arrival of the camels from the country enabled us to make a start. Our party consisted of Mr. Warrington and myself, on horseback, with a cook, groom, and two camel-drivers. The camels carried our tents and baggage; and a stout jackass, with a pair of capacious panniers, served also to mount the cook. Besides my double-barrel and a rifle, I carried an "elevator" gun; and I cannot speak too highly of its utility for travelling on horseback.

The first day we journeyed eastward through narrow lanes among groves of palms, intermixed with fig-, olive-, carob-, orange-, and mulberry-trees, which afford a temporary resting-place to the migratory birds, for whose passage, however, I was unfortunately too early. These palm-groves terminate in a series of salt-lakes, at the edge of which we encamped for the first night; and as I set off with my gun through marshes overgrown with rushes the spot seemed to realize one's *beau idéal* of "happy hunting-grounds," especially as I had heard of the large bags of wildfowl made by Tripolitan sportsmen. I saw nothing, however, but a few Snipe and a flock of Plover, and in the far distance the snowy white plumage of a pair of Flamingos.

The nextday, skirting the Tajoura lakes, we entered the desert, following a track close to the sea. Here *Alauda cristata* was very common, and I once or twice distinguished an *Ammomanes*, probably *A. deserti*; *Corvus corax* and what appeared to be a Hen-Harrier passed by out of range. I shot a fine male specimen of *Lanius dealbatus*, the stomach of which contained the remains of a large desert-beetle. We crossed several deep gullies or "wadys," at the bottom of which were usually small streams, supporting a luxuriant vegetation on either side. I shot *Ægialites minor*, but feathered inhabitants were very scarce.

After three days in the desert we began to ascend towards the hills; and patches of cultivation appeared here and there, while Quails and Wheatears (*Saxicola ænanthe*) suddenly became numerous. Finding a pleasant shady spot among the hills, I

determined to encamp for a couple of days and rest ; for the hot south wind, which raised the thermometer to 90° or more in the shade, made travelling anything but agreeable. I shot here several Barbary Partridges (*Cuccabis petrosa*), which abounded among the steep rocky hills covered with low scrub. These birds rise well to the sportsman approaching from above, but woe to him who seeks to follow them up the steep side of a hill ; for they run on in advance till, disappearing over the crest before their pursuer reaches it, they take wing to the other side of the valley. An Arab brought me the eggs of this bird, seven in number, which he had just taken. I also found a nest of *Alauda cristata* placed close to the ground and containing three eggs. I here observed *Crateropus acaciæ*, but unfortunately could not procure a specimen, though, as I was familiar with this bird in Nubia, I feel sure I was not mistaken as to its identity. *Ædicnemus crepitans* I twice saw ; and among the olive-trees which encircled our camp *Sylvia melanocephala* and *S. subalpina* were very plentiful. I sent off an Arab to Tripoli laden with a basket of hares and Partridges for my friend ; and, in spite of the suffocating hot wind, he accomplished the distance of sixty-six miles on foot in twenty hours, and, after one night's rest, returned eighty miles to our next encampment in forty-four hours, and, so far from appearing fatigued, immediately set out to accompany me shooting for another twenty miles !

Another day's journey brought us to Lebdaḥ, the site of the ancient Leptis, the ruins of which, now half-buried in sand, cover a large area. Even the sea itself has united with the sand and the wind in the work of destruction, and has made great inroads into what was once a flourishing city, and gold ornaments are often found by the natives on the beach after a storm. I passed two days amid this scene of desolation under the guidance of good Sheyk Omar, one of the most intelligent and hospitable of Arab chiefs I ever met with. *Columba livia*, *Athene persica*, *Tinnunculus alaudarius*, *Corvus corax* and *Saxicola stapa* were the feathered inhabitants of the ruins, while on the banks of the stream which intersects the ancient city, the Green Sandpiper appeared to be the sole representative of the class which I had hoped to find more numerous. In a thorny

tree I found a nest of *Lanius dealbatus*, placed about ten feet from the ground, composed of sticks roughly put together, and containing one egg. I subsequently found two more nests of this bird, containing eggs nearly ready to hatch.

Leaving LebDAH, we struck due south across the hills, and two days' journey brought us to Umsalahta, a large village with a Turkish governor, who received us in due form. On a neighbouring hill are the remains of a Roman castle, commanding a magnificent prospect over the hills stretching far away southward into the Great Sahara and bounded on the north by the distant line of the Mediterranean, while immediately below lay rich fertile valleys, covered with olive-trees that are celebrated for their great age and size. Among these groves I found *Lanius auriculatus*, *Petronia stulta*, *Ruticilla phænicura*, and *Dromolea leucura*. From Umsalahta, a long day's march brought us to a wild rocky gorge called El Dou-oun, the rugged sides of which abounded with jackals and foxes; and hyænas are not uncommon. This valley also shelters a predatory Arab chief and his myrmidons, who paid us a friendly visit, and brought a present of fodder for our animals, as a token of the esteem in which Mr. Warrington is universally held among all classes of Arabs. I made an excursion with my gun, following the course of a small streamlet, the sides of which abounded with Partridges and Pigeons, whilst from the rushes I flushed *Scolopax gallinago* and *Totanus ochropus*. I shot *Philomela lusciniæ* and *Ruticilla phænicura*, and observed *Dromolea leucura*, as well as, I think, *D. lugens*. The former were evidently breeding, though I was not able to discover a nest.

Emerging from this valley, we entered on a vast undulating and treeless plateau; and two days' march brought us to Turhona, the headquarters of a powerful tribe, whose sheyk gave us a warm welcome. I had been looking forward to our arrival on these plains as the reputed home of numerous Bustards; but, to my disappointment, I was assured that during the winter these birds migrate southward into the desert, and only reappear when compelled by the scorching heat of summer. This account was confirmed by an American gentleman resident in Tripoli.

Not far from our camp flowed a clear rivulet, forming what is a rare sight in that country, an extremely pretty cascade ; and near this spot, for the first and only time during my journey, I recognized an old Nile acquaintance in *Cotyle rupestris* ; for, so far as my observation went, this charming Rock-Martin appeared to confine its flight to this one little stream. On a neighbouring hill the common Wheatear and *Saxicola stapazina* were equally abundant ; and I here observed *Petrocincla saxatilis* for the first time. *P. cyanea* I was surprised never to meet with. *Turdus pilaris* I think I once saw. While wandering near the waterfall just after sunset, I was delighted at hearing the unmistakable clucking of Sand-Grouse, and soon perceived large quantities flying high overhead due south. An Arab informed me they constantly came to drink at this spot early. Next morning at break of day I was on the look-out. No Sand-Grouse, however, made their appearance ; and my Arab, ever ready with an excuse, assured me that it was too cold ; but the next day, on leaving Turhona, and travelling over a sandy plain covered with rough grass, I fell in with them in great numbers, though they were so wild that I could not once get within range. Their size and black breasts showed them to be *Pterocles arenaria* ; but the Arabs asserted that two other species are also found there.

I shot *Alauda brachydactyla*, and saw a large Eagle, which I took to be *Aquila imperialis* ; but he was too wary to allow me to make certain of the fact. With the exception of two, or perhaps three, species of *Circus*, birds of prey seemed scarce in Tripoli ; and Vultures I never met with. Two long days' march over a wild country brought us to Ghrian ; and *en route* I shot a pair of *Jynx torquilla*, and saw a pair of *Erythrospiza githaginea* in beautiful plumage. Ghrian boasts a Turkish governor ; and its strong castle, built on the brink of a precipitous ravine, has stood many a siege. Its garrison are armed with English "Enfields." The great peculiarity of this district lies in the subterraneous habitations used by the Arabs. An enormous pit, some thirty feet wide and deep, is dug in the ground, and the earth thus excavated is piled round the edge, while the bottom of the pit forms the court-yard of the dwelling. On either side

are excavated large and spacious rooms, stable, kitchen, and so forth, which are at all seasons deliciously cool. The entrance to this Robinson Crusoe's habitation is formed by a subterraneous passage from the surface of the ground some fifty yards distant, and sloping gradually downwards till it emerges in the courtyard just described.

Our homeward route now lay due north, towards Tripoli; and a long day's march brought us to the foot of the hills. I heard for the first time the clear song of the Orphean Warbler, *Sylvia orphea*; and the Woodchat-Shrike, *Lanius auriculatus*, seemed very abundant among the olive-groves. Crossing the plain, I met with a large flock of Bee-eaters, *Merops apiaster*, and I also saw *Saxicola rubetra*, *Budytes flava*, and several more Bush-Babblers, *Crateropus acaciæ*. A pair of large Doves crossed our path, but of what species they were I do not feel sure. On the 17th April I found myself once more under the hospitable roof of our Consul-General, and on the 18th the Turkish steamer 'Tralulus Garb' afforded me an opportunity of returning to Malta. I afterwards travelled through Tunis and Algeria; but of no part of my trip do I entertain such pleasing recollections as of my month's sojourn in Tripoli.

V.—*Remarks on Dr. Léotaud's 'Birds of Trinidad'**. By P. L. SCLATER, M.A., F.R.S. &c.

WHEN we consider the easy communication so long established between Trinidad and this country, and the facilities afforded by the presence in that colony of professional bird-collectors, it is certainly strange that the magnificent forests of that island should have been so little visited by naturalists, and that up to the present time no connected account has ever been published of its rich avifauna. Except the interesting article contributed by our colleague Mr. E. C. Taylor to this

* Oiseaux de l'île de la Trinidad (Antilles), par A. LÉOTAUD, Docteur en Médecine de la Faculté de Paris; Membre Correspondant de la Société de Médecine de Gand. Port d'Espagne: Chronicle Publishing Office, 1866. 1 vol. 8vo, pp. 560.